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TODAY'S FREE SHOWS

Lil' Ed at 9 and 12:30 a.m.

Noon Little Jimmy Bowskill trio (Complexe Desjardins, inside).
Noon L'Esprit de la Nouvelle Orléans (Terrasse Grand Marnier).
1 p.m. Sweet Dixie (Terrasse Grand Marnier).
2 p.m. La Petite École du Jazz (Complexe Desjardins, inside).
2 p.m. Zéphyrologie Starlouz Fanfare Brass Band. Strolling musicians, departure from the corner of Ste. Catherine and St. Urbain Sts.
3 p.m. Stage Band of Ozias Leduc High School (General Motors stage).
3:30 p.m. La Petite École du Jazz (Complexe Desjardins, inside).
4 p.m. Sweet Dixie (du Maurier/Radio-Canada stage).
5 p.m. Zéphyrologie Starlouz Fanfare Brass Band (Banque Nationale stage).
6 p.m. Sean Craig (General Motors stage).
6:15 p.m. Zéphyrologie Starlouz Fanfare Brass Band (Banque Nationale stage).
6:30 p.m. Richard Leo Johnson (Carrefour General Motors).
7 p.m. Le Dixieband (Terrasse Grand Marnier).
7 p.m. Carl Tremblay (Labatt Bleue stage).
7 p.m. Nancy Walker (Club du Maurier).
7:30 p.m. Ya Kengué (Bleue Légère stage).
8 p.m. Anthony Wonsey Trio (Banque Nationale stage).
8 p.m. Dino Martini (du Maurier/Radio-Canada stage).
9 p.m. Raymond Scott Orchestrette (General Motors stage).
9 p.m. Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials (Labatt Bleue stage).
9 p.m. Antonio Calogero Ensemble (Carrefour General Motors).
10 p.m. Anthony Wonsey Trio (Banque Nationale stage).
10 p.m. Dino Martini (du Maurier/Radio-Canada stage).
10 p.m. Vander et du Beau Monde club experience (Bleue Légère stage).
10 p.m. Nancy Walker (Club du Maurier).
11 p.m. Raymond Scott Orchestrette (General Motors stage).
11 p.m. Carl Tremblay (Labatt Bleue stage).
11 p.m. Thuryn Von Pranke with Adrian Vedady and Martin Auguste (Hôtel Wyndham).
11:30 p.m. Nu Jazz Trio with Dan Thouin, Max Sansalone and Peter Dowse (Savoy).
12:30 a.m. Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials (Spectrum).

VENUES

Du Maurier/Radio-Canada stage, south side Ste. Catherine St., between Jeanne Mance and St. Urbain Sts.
Carrefour General Motors, corner of de Maisonneuve Blvd. and Jeanne Mance St.
Labatt Blues stage, St. Urbain St. and de Maisonneuve Blvd., north of de Montigny St.
Bleue Light stage, Bleury St., south of de Maisonneuve Blvd.
Terrasse Grand Marnier, west side of Place des Arts esplanade.
Banque Nationale stage, east side of Place des Arts esplanade.
General Motors stage, corner of Ste. Catherine and Jeanne Mance Sts.
Club du Maurier, south side of Ste. Catherine St., between St. Urbain and Clark Sts.
Hotel Wyndham, enter by Jeanne Mance St., south of Ste. Catherine St.
Savoy at the Métropolis, 59 Ste. Catherine St. E.
Complexe Desjardins stage, inside the complexe, enter by Ste. Catherine St.

BEST BET

The boy wonder Jimmy Bowskill

Little Jimmy Bowskill (Complexe Desjardins, inside). The raves around the Bowskill kid may or may not have benefited from some exaggeration, from the desire of blues fans to have a prodigy of their own. Still, it isn't every day a 12-year-old Ontario boy can hold a guitar upright for expended periods, let alone cut a version of Crossroads to make Eric Clapton sit up. The Peterborough Prodigy is an old soul. You may one day say, "I was there when ..." – a gamble worth taking.

Mark Lepage

ESSENTIAL INFO

The Montreal International Jazz Festival runs through Sunday, July 6. The complete schedule is on the Web site www.montrealjazzfest.com. Tickets can be purchased from Admission at the Web site www.admission.com or (514) 790-1245, and in person at the Spectrum box office, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. For general festival information call (514) 871-1881.

Zawinul and Davis, together again

JOHN KENNEY THE GAZETTE

Pianist and composer Joe Zawinul receives the Montreal International Jazz Festival's Miles Davis prize for 2003. The 71-year-old, a founder of Weather Report, played with the late, legendary trumpeter.

FESTIVAL NOTES

Two hot bands set the pace as Grand Prix race starts up

There were no opening-night jitters for two fine Canadian bands on Thursday as competition kicked off for the Grand Prix de Jazz General Motors. The annual award to an outstanding Canadian group at the festival includes $5,000, 50 hours of studio time, a licensing deal with Montreal's Justin Time Records and a chance to close the festival with a show Sunday night. Both the Richard Gagnon Quintet and the Donny Kennedy Sextet got out of the blocks quickly with performances that clearly impressed their audiences. The Gagnon band offered a lyrical and swinging take on the hard bop music of the 1950s, with the leader's highly melodic solos on trombone setting the pace. Later, 24-year-old Regina native Donny Kennedy, a McGill jazz grad, led his sextet through a mix of intriguing compositions. With pianist Bryn Roberts, guitarist Kenny Biboce, trumpeter Dave Mossing, bassist Dave Watts and drummer André White, this band set the bar high for everyone else in the competition.

PETER HADEKEL

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Montreal drummer Greg Ritchie, who plays with François Bourassa, had to summon all his cool Thursday night when he sat in with Karrin Allyson and her band at Club Soda: he had made the group's acquaintance only four hours earlier. News came early in the week that her regular drummer, Todd Strait, was unable to make the gig. Festival organizers contacted Ritchie and provided him with a few of the singer's CDs so he could get acquainted with some key material. He and the New York-based Allyson kept in touch by E-mail. On-the-job experience came only Thursday when the band did a 3 p.m. soundcheck. "We went over about 10 or a dozen tunes, but we only played about half of them," Ritchie said. Others were worked out in concert. Known for making changes to her set, Allyson gave Ritchie onstage instructions before they played Bonnie Raitt's Give It Up Or Let Me Go. "I wasn't so much nervous as on my toes," Ritchie said. "I had to be ready for anything." Luckily, both singer and bandmembers were supportive and helpful, he said. Ritchie, 23, handled himself with grace and professionalism – not so surprising for a man who's been playing drums since he was 12. Unfortunately, the Allyson show stopped him from catching boss Bourassa's opening set with André Leroux at Wayne Shorter's Place des Arts performance. He also had to limit his post-concert celebrating to a couple of quick drinks: "I didn't really get to hang out. I had my regular jam-session gig with Jeff Johnston and Jim Vivian at the Upstairs Jazz Bar."

BERNARD PERUSSE

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Texas trumpeter Roy Hargrove was in party mode at the Spectrum Thursday night as he led a 10-piece funk band through riffs from his Hard Groove album. You could almost smell the fried chicken. But while the band's wall of sound and solo spots from Hargrove and his horn players had the room moving, the music didn't get much beyond a kind of put-your-hands-together simplicity.

PETER HADEKEL

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The Solo Piano series got off to a sweet start at the Monument National with the king and young prince of French jazz, Martial Solal and Baptiste Trotignon. The 29-year-old has the air of an eternal student, à la Jean-Pierre Léaud from François Truffault's films. Hunched Gould-like over the piano, Trotignon was by turns whimsical, effervescent and infused with pleasant precocity. He displayed a masterful control over the dynamic range of the piano, with an amazingly light right hand that gave new meaning to the phrase "tickling the ivories." The audience was delighted, and Trotignon reciprocated with a final encore of the seminal Elvis ballad Love Me Tender. His latest album, Solo, was officially launched in North America yesterday by the fine local label Effendi in collaboration with France's Naive.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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Solal, 76, had played in Orleans, France, the night before. "Il est tard," he sighed, during a short but game performance. He deconstructed and referenced standards in such a brazen way that his show was almost a case of Name That Tune (including such old reliables as Night and Day, Caravan, Smoke Gets In Your Eyes, I Can't Give You Anything But Love and Thelonious Monk's Well, You Needn't). Mike Chamberlain, local critic for Hour and Coda, quipped as he stepped out for a brief smoke: "I'm willing to bet he's playing the same 40 songs when I get back." The potato-faced gentleman with the self-effacing shrug and smile ended his concert by giving the piano a little kiss, before finally getting some sleep.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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When Herbie Hancock arrived at the Hotel Wyndham on Wednesday evening, he was reminded by local jazz DJ Len Dobbin (CKUT, Sundays at 11 a.m.) that the very first time he played Montreal was exactly 40 years ago, with the late, great trombonist J.J. Johnson at the old Tête de L'Art club. Indeed, how could Hancock forget? It was during that engagement that he got the fateful phone call from Miles Davis to join him in what became known as Davis's second great quintet.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

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Opening night at the jazz festival couldn't have brought a greater array of dissimilar pleasures. Daniela Mercury was almost done whipping fans into a sweaty frenzy at the Spectrum when singer Karrin Allyson took the stage at Club Soda, which – at least on Thursday night – was not a few blocks away, but in a different world entirely. Appropriately decked out in supper-club cool, the club played host to a sedate – and comfortably seated – crowd, who applauded politely each time Allyson and her backup quartet brought another song in for a smooth landing. By 10 p.m., there was another parallel-universe thing going on at the Metropolis as Medeski, Martin and Wood took the stage. DJ P-Love introduced a piercing scratch foundation that gave way to a bubbling, insistent phrase on Chris Wood's upright bass. By the time a frenetic piano solo by John Medeski resolved into some kind of Martian barrel-house boogie, the cheers were threatening to overtake the music. An hour later, La Gran Orquesta Cubana de Montreal with Convoy Cubano brought the crowd to a stop around the General Motors stage. The infectious sounds of Cuban son and guajira played by 12 dark-suited musicians, mixed with the flashy exhortations of hip-hop duo Neiver Alvarez and Reinery Diaz, had a sizeable number dancing one Ste. Catherine St. as the midnight hour struck.

BERNARD PERUSSE

DAVE SIDAWAY THE GAZETTE

Trumpeter/composer Kenny Wheeler accepts his trophy yesterday for the Prix Oscar Peterson, for contributions to Canadian jazz.

A new sound out of Alberta

VIOLIST HAS CLASSICAL STRINGS ATTACHED

Professors at Juilliard didn't look kindly on Kalmanovitch 'dabbling in the lower arts'

JOHN GRIFFIN
THE GAZETTE

If there is a spin-off Mensa club for jazz musicians, Tanya Kalmanovitch is its standing president.

The 32-year-old Kalmanovitch is a violinist and violist and native of lovely Fort McMurray, Alta., an alumna of the Juilliard School of Music, current PhD candidate in the enthnomusicology department of the University of Alberta, and proud owner of a challenging and rewarding new CD called Hut Five.

She will be bringing all of those credentials and more to her first-ever festival appearance at the Musée d'Art Contemporain tonight.

The "more" factor is an omnivorous general intelligence, fierce wit, rigorous command of musical language and the sheer joy of playing a concert with her band where people actually listen and everyone gets paid. Her alternately dark and light, stern and playful blend of 20th-century classical music and next-wave jazz is many galaxies removed from nice white girls who sing songbook scat in hotel lounges, and she's happy for the public exposure. After all, she's a working jazz artist.

"I only really acknowledged my transition from classical to jazz last year," she said while packing up her belongings in Calgary recently, en route to study, life, travel and the Holy Grail of a work permit in Europe.

"It took me a while to see how I could be a jazz musician. At Juilliard I was very interested in jazz but was blocked at every turn by professors who didn't want me dabbling in the 'lower' art forms."

The canny Kalmanovitch responded by working the commercial jazz circuit in Calgary until "two or three years ago, when I took a complete break from that kind of music. I had an early midlife crisis and decided I cannot play the Calgary Stampede and pubs ever again."

Kalmanovitch remembered she had a facility in academic-speak, and parlayed the jargon into a sweet gig studying music and getting paid for it – "the miracle of a regular income" – at the University of Alberta.

"I hit upon the idea of yolking theory to practice, and it's financing my career at the moment" – with a little help from the Canada Council for the Arts, which is supporting her current tour and helped swing Hut Five, an album she now owns outright.

The next great leap forward involves another passion – travel. There are trips to India and London for field research, "but really just to play my music." The long-term dream is gaining an employment toehold in Europe, "where people like my kind of stuff."

"My music consists of two polarities. There's the heavily composed stuff, and free improv. The setup is a very specific and detailed sound world and it gives the improvisation great landscape to play on. They're really just both ends of the same continuum."

Having glibly rolled out this last phrase, Kalmanovitch goes to her computer desk-top dictionary to make sure a continuum can have ends. It does. Consider it just another part of this richly talented artist's ongoing research.

Tanya Kalmanovitch, guitarist Rick Peckham, bassist Ronan Guilfoyle and drummer Owen Roberts play the Musée d'Art Contemporain tonight at 9. For more on her, visit her Web site www.tanyakalmanovitch.com

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REVIEW

Kora player, drummer shine

SUSO, DEJOHNETTE MEET WITH SIMPLICITY

Collaboration's success due to musicians' sensitive, respectful approach

PETER HADEKEL
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

"The moon is bright in an African village," Foday Musa Suso described.

"There's a big tree in the centre. And because there's no electricity, the children will come out to play in the village square until the moon sets and they go to bed."

It was a description of disarming simplicity from the Gambian village in which he grew up, a scene transported to the Monument National stage last night where the moon shone brightly on Suso, his 21-stringed kora and drummer Jack DeJohnette.

This jazz festival wears its globalization colours proudly, fiercely promoting the cross-pollination of musical cultures.

So it was entirely fitting that a West African kora player with a sweet tenor voice should encounter a Chicago-born jazz drummer who's moved in the orbits of Miles Davis and Keith Jarrett.

Suso is very much a global citizen himself, having moved to Chicago in 1977 to bridge the musical heritage of the West African griot with the contemporary traditions of jazz and the classics.

He's worked with everyone from avant-garde saxophonist Pharaoh Sanders to rock drummer Ginger Baker to the Kronos String Quartet.

He's a musician with such big ears and open heart that he's collaborated with contemporary composer Philip Glass on a score for a Jean Genet play, not to mention penning a theme with Herbie Hancock for the 1984 Olympic Games.

If last night's collaboration with DeJohnette was so successful, it was because both artists approached the music with respect and sensitivity.

The kora is an instrument of sunny temperament but could

> This jazz festival fiercly promotes the cross-pollination of musical cultures.

easily have been swallowed whole by DeJohnette's huge sound.

It was to the drummer's credit that he listened carefully to the lilting, insistent refrains from the string player, laying down hints of a reggae beat here, a jazzy cymbal ride there, all the while keeping a vigorous line on the bass drum.

Nothing flashy here. Just balm for a troubled world.

Jack DeJohnette performs tonight with Don Byron, Edsel Gomez, Jerome Harris, Luisito Quintero and Giovanni Hidalgo; and tomorrow with Bobby McFerrin. Both shows are at 7 p.m. at Monument National.

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